

U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Washington, DC 20528



**Homeland
Security**

APR 15 2004

The Honorable Edward J. Markey
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Markey:

Thank you for your letter of March 23, 2004, to Secretary Ridge regarding the shipment of LNG into Boston.

Secretary Ridge shares your concerns for the security of liquefied natural gas facilities, and indeed for all port facilities throughout our country. Neither the Coast Guard nor the Department has ever had any information indicating a threat to attack an LNG tanker in Boston Harbor; however, the prospect that terrorists might gain access, by whatever means, and inflict damage to our ports or the surrounding population is a constant reminder of the importance of our homeland security mission.

I've attached two documents to answer your questions. Regarding the concern about Algerian infiltration, the first document indicates that in early 2001 there was some suspicion of possible associations between stowaways on Algerian flagged LNG tankers arriving in Boston and persons connected with the so-called "Millennium Plot." As a result of that suspicion, the Coast Guard increased its scrutiny of LNG vessels and worked with LNG terminal operators and state and local officials to intensify security measures even in the absence of specific, credible threat information.

Regarding actions to secure LNG facilities, the second document describes the comprehensive security protections the Department has built into LNG operations. The risks associated with LNG shipments are real, and they can never be entirely eliminated. They are significantly reduced, however, by the measures DHS takes during each and every port visit. The Department believes it is doing all it can to manage the risks successfully.

I appreciate your interest in the Department of Homeland Security, and I look forward to working with you on future homeland security issues. If I may be of further assistance, please contact the Office of Legislative Affairs at (202) 205-4412.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Pamela J. Turner".

Pamela J. Turner
Assistant Secretary for Legislative Affairs

Attachments

Algerian Infiltration

The U.S. Coast Guard has never possessed credible information indicating either a threat to attack an LNG tanker in Boston Harbor; or to use an LNG tanker to conduct an attack on the city of Boston.

About 10 years ago, the Coast Guard did receive information concerning alleged criminal activity associated with LNG tankers entering the Boston area. Several enforcement actions were undertaken in conjunction with other federal, state and local agencies to address that activity.

For example, during 1995, the Coast Guard was aware that the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) and the U.S. Customs Service (USCS) were investigating Algerian flagged LNG tankers for involvement in drug and illegal alien smuggling. As one of several agencies supporting these investigations, the Coast Guard, in August 1995, joined in a USCS and INS boarding of an Algerian-flagged vessel in Boston suspected of carrying drugs and illegal aliens. Also, in May of 2001, the Coast Guard, USCS, INS, FBI, and state & local officials boarded the Algerian LNG carrier MOSTEFA BEN BOULAID and discovered substantial amounts of U.S. currency and illegal drugs. One Algerian crewmember was arrested in connection with the drug seizure. Since May 2001, no Algerian LNG carriers have entered the Port of Boston.

During 2000 and 2001, personnel assigned to the First Coast Guard District in Boston received information at the field level that another federal agency in the region was following up on a suspicion that there may be a possible connection between stowaways on Algerian-flagged LNG tankers in Boston and persons connected with the so-called "Millennium Plot." Based upon that information, as well as the prior criminal illegal activity, the Coast Guard intensified its scrutiny of LNG vessels by working with LNG terminal operators and state & local officials to enhance security measures. Last October the Coast Guard created a joint task force with CBP and ICE analysts to determine whether there is information indicating that Algerian nationals have been using maritime transport to illegally enter the US and whether these individuals have links to Islamic extremists. The research is ongoing. Preliminary analysis shows a handful of illegal migrants may have had indirect associations with those indicted for the Millennium Bombing Plot. However, this information is largely derived from what these individuals told law enforcement. The Department has not been able to verify what the associations, intentions, or operational activities of these individuals were when they entered the United States.

Also, as a result of conversations between National Security Council staff and senior Coast Guard officials during the spring and summer 2001 regarding an increase in the level of general terrorism-related intelligence reporting, the Coast Guard tasked its Intelligence Coordination Center to gather more information on LNG tankers and other "high consequence" vessels approaching the United States. Before September 11, the

Coast Guard took appropriate steps to ensure the safety and security of LNG tank vessels during transit and operations, including in Boston Harbor. After September 11, immediate steps were taken to expand the required notification of arrival to 96 hours, to centralize notification and analysis of information, and to require submission of crew and passenger information. Under the larger security apparatus put into place post-September 11, all LNG carriers are subjected to increased pre-arrival vetting and security measures.

To further assist you in understanding the specific details of this issue, the Coast Guard is prepared to provide a separate classified briefing at your convenience.

Actions to Secure LNG Facilities in Boston

LNG has been safely imported into Boston since the 1970's. The frequency of LNG tankers has increased sharply in recent years due to an increased regional demand for and reliance on the fuel. In 1998, the port received 17 LNG tankers. In 2003, the number exceeded 60.

Under procedures in place since the 1970's, LNG tankers undergo a detailed inspection annually to verify compliance with federal safety and navigation laws. In addition, they are boarded prior to arrival in port to verify that all cargo monitoring and control systems remain in proper operating condition, and that no substantial changes have occurred since the most recent detailed annual inspection. The crewmembers are identified and checked against criminal and terrorist databases, and the inspection team checks the vessel spaces. Should a vessel be found not in satisfactory condition, it would not be allowed into port until the condition was corrected.

The Coast Guard has always established a moving safety zone around LNG tankers in transit through the harbor. This effectively controls other vessel traffic in the port and reduces the likelihood of a marine accident involving other vessels. In addition, LNG tankers have also historically been escorted through the port of Boston by Coast Guard vessels to enforce the safety zone and prevent accidents with smaller craft, including recreational boats, that may be unfamiliar with the dangers of operating in close proximity to a large vessel in a confined waterway. Persons or vessels violating safety zone regulations are subject to both civil and criminal penalties under federal law. These precautions, together with a commitment on the part of the operating companies and cooperation of the boating public and maritime industry, have resulted in an excellent safety record.

Security issues surrounding LNG transits are also of particular concern. These concerns center on the susceptibility of LNG tankers to terrorist attack, since the vessels must pass close by downtown Boston on their way to the LNG facility in Everett, Mass. Acting on these concerns, the Coast Guard exercised its port security authority after September 11, 2001, to require additional information from the operating company as to the likely effects of an intentional attack against the vessel. This had the effect of delaying LNG arrivals for a time in 2001, until the risk could be characterized.

To satisfy this requirement, the operating company contracted with Lloyds Register, an internationally recognized ship classification society, to perform a vulnerability study on LNG tankers. Simultaneously, the U.S. Department of Energy contracted with Quest Consultants to explore the potential consequences of hypothetical outflows of cargo from a damaged LNG tank. This study was undertaken at the request of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Executive Office of Public Safety. These two studies, plus numerous consultations with technical experts within the federal government, provided sufficient information to characterize the nature of the risk and ascertain the strengths and weaknesses of LNG operations. Once this was understood, the Coast Guard, in conjunction with state and local agencies and the industry, developed strategies and techniques to minimize identified vulnerabilities.

These measures include security boardings prior to port arrival to ensure that the vessel is under proper control at all times, a moving security zone surrounding the vessel at all times, periodic underwater examinations, actions to minimize potential damage on board the vessel from an internal threat, and preventive actions to "harden" the vessel against potential external attacks through a robust security screen around the vessel. LNG vessel arrivals since September 11 have all been subject to these additional security measures.

The Department of Homeland Security has also worked closely with the industry to upgrade security procedures at overseas loading ports, and on several occasions has visited the primary loading port in Trinidad to assess point-of-origin security conditions. The conditions at the loading facility in Trinidad were found to be comparable to those now required for U.S. facilities under the Maritime Transportation Security Act (MTSA). Special additional security measures have been developed should a shipment originate from another port. Coast Guard inspectors also periodically ride LNG tankers from Trinidad to Boston, performing all necessary inspections en route, and verifying on board security measures.

A Unified Command post is established for every transit of LNG vessels through Boston Harbor when the Coast Guard receives the Advance Notice of Arrival that the ship is required to provide at least 96 hours prior to port entry. Among other information, the notice includes details of the crew, cargo, and history of the vessel, all of which are evaluated using a number of national security databases. The Unified Command Post is located at the Coast Guard base in Boston, and includes representatives from the Massachusetts State Police, Massachusetts Environmental Police, Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency, and Boston Police and Fire. Presence in the command post ensures coordinated operations among all participating agencies on the water, on land and in the air, and positions key agencies for rapid and effective response in the event of an incident. In addition to coordinated operations by participating agencies, over 20 agencies from surrounding communities, including police, fire and emergency medical services are advised in advance of LNG transits.

The Department of Homeland Security also sponsors a Field Intelligence Support Team (FIST), comprised of agencies with a port interest, including Coast Guard, Customs and Border Protection, Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Office of Naval Intelligence, Massachusetts State Police, and the Massachusetts National Guard. The FIST provides daily intelligence support to the Captain of the Port with a particular focus on anticipated vessel arrivals, including LNG tankers. The FIST works in close association with the FBI's Joint Terrorism Task Force.

In addition to a very robust security plan to prevent intentional damage to LNG tankers operating in Boston Harbor, the Coast Guard has worked with the fire services, particularly in Boston and Everett, and with the industry, to develop a realistic consequence management plan in the event of a large-scale release of LNG. The plan uses mutually agreed upon averages of several LNG spill, fire and radiant heat models to estimate potentially affected areas. The response plans developed by the fire departments, Coast Guard and industry were successfully practiced most recently in a large-scale tabletop exercise in October 2003. Safety and security plans are

continually being reviewed and updated to manage risks as effectively and realistically as possible.

Risks associated with transportation of any hazardous cargo can never be entirely eliminated, but they can be managed. Based on the various studies conducted to date, the historic safety record of LNG vessels in international service, and the numerous safety and security measures in effect for LNG vessels calling at US ports, (including vessel traffic restrictions, security zones, armed escorts, etc.) the Department believes LNG tanker operations can continue to be safely conducted in US ports. The Maritime Transportation Security Act will soon require improved security for all vessels and facilities; however, LNG vessels and the facility in Boston have been operating and will continue to operate at a level of security well above that envisioned by the Act.